

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB



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THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB aims to:

- * encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.
- * liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.
- * collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually.

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Cover illustration: Pheasant-tailed Jacanas *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* by David Swithenbank.

Editorial

The front cover of this Bulletin, an illustration of Pheasant-tailed Lily-trotters, or, as they should be referred to, Jacanas, was chosen as it is the work of David Swithenbank, one of several artists who showed their pictures at OBC's summer meeting in Blakeney. We hope that our meetings provide a useful opportunity for artists specialising in Oriental birds to show their work to an interested audience. Likewise, for the Bulletin, we are always very happy to hear from artists who would like to contribute illustrations for articles. Anyone who would like to offer work should contact our picture editor Craig Robson who can provide guidelines and ideas for what is needed.

In the Club News section of this Bulletin we are pleased to announce details of what will be OBC's first meeting to be held in the Oriental region. The combination of talks and field visits, including what promises to be an exciting night ringing session on Malaysia's Fraser's Hill, sounds most exciting and we hope as many members as possible will be able to attend.

Members will be relieved to know that this issue of the Bulletin is correctly numbered and is the real issue 10. Our last issue was incorrectly numbered and should have been numbered issue 9. We apologise for this.

As usual, the Bulletin has been produced with the help of many people and thanks must of course go first of all to the contributors of articles and illustrations. We are also very grateful to Tim Johnson and Gina Pfaff for their help in setting up the word processing system, to Julie Gray for help with typing in the text, to Craig Robson, and to the International Council for Bird Preservation for allowing us to use their facilities.



Club News

1989 Annual General Meeting

The 1989 AGM of the Oriental Bird Club will be held, as in the last two years, at the Zoological Society of London meeting rooms on Saturday 16 December. The doors open at 12.30pm. Full details are enclosed.

Meetings in 1990

OBC meeting at 7th Nordic Congress of Ornithology

On 10 August 1990, OBC will hold a meeting at the end of the 7th Nordic Congress of Ornithology to be held in Krabbesholm, Hojskole, Skive (in north-west Jutland), Denmark. The meeting will take place in the afternoon and evening and there will be talks as well as time for discussion. Full details will be announced in the next Bulletin.

Malaysian Meeting

OBC will hold a field meeting in Malaysia from 5 to 10 October. Members will meet on 5 October at 19.30hrs at the Guinness Stout Brewery in Kuala Lumpur. On the 6 October the group will travel to Fraser's Hill and a day's birdwatching will be followed by a talk by leading ornithologist David Wells and a night ringing session. On 7 October the meeting will move to Taman Negara where there will be three days of birdwatching in Malaysia's best-known national park. We hope that following the OBC meeting, members will travel on 12 October to Kuala Selangor to support the Malay Nature Society's Selangor Bird Race on 13 October, details of which are given on page 40. The meeting and whole week of events should be an excellent opportunity for members to get together, and for some enjoyable birdwatching. For further details of the OBC Field Meeting, write to Dennis Yong, c/o Malayan Nature Society, PO Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Sales News

The Hornbill Heads T-shirt is proving very popular - hurry and place your order if you want to have one as they will soon be sold out. All stocks of the Malay Nature Society Diard's Trogon and the OBC Flying Hornbill T-shirts have now been sold leaving just the Gurney's Pitta design in addition to Hornbill Heads. Full details of other sales items available are given in the enclosed flier, but readers should note that a *Field Guide to the Birds of Java and Bali* is currently unobtainable and that the price of the *Bibliography of Philippine Ornithology* has risen to £7.00 (surface) and £8.50 (airmail).

OBC Checklist Update

For over two years, a sub-committee of the OBC Council has been working on the production of a list of Oriental bird species. The list will comprise two parts. The first is a nominal list of Oriental bird species, modelled on K. H. Voous's *List of recent Holarctic bird species* (British Ornithologists Union 1977). For each species the scientific and recommended English name will be followed by a synonymy of the scientific names (where they differ) used in the various standard works dealing with Oriental birds, as well as taxonomic notes and references. The second part is a coded checklist, giving the status of every species in each of 33 subdivisions of the Oriental region. With some 2580 species of birds, comprising a quarter of the world's avifauna, this is a mammoth task but, with much help from various regional experts, it is hoped to have the list finished sometime in 1991.

Summer Meeting in Blakeney

Some 90 people attended the OBC's summer meeting at Blakeney, on England's north Norfolk coast in August. Jon Eames spoke about his visit with Guy Duke to Pakistan this year in May and June when they were surveying valleys in Indus Kohistan for the globally threatened Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus*. The results of their surveys are reported in News and Views. Jon also emphasised some of the issues affecting the future of the Tragopan which is dependent on the conservation of its habitat. Planned logging is a serious threat but Jon spoke of the need to involve local people in conservation, how there were messages on conservation in the Koran which could help to get more people involved, and of the importance of education in the conservation effort.

Mark Brazil gave a superbly illustrated and most interesting and amusing talk on birdwatching in Japan. He highlighted the attractions of the different seasons which included birdwatching from the comfort of a natural hot spring in winter, to watching Amami Woodcock *Scolopax mira*, Okinawa Rail *Rallus okinawae* and Okinawa Woodpecker *Sapheopipo noguchii* in the summer on Japan's southern islands. He told how this year is the first in living memory that no sea ice has formed off Hokkaido, where Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus* usually roost; how winter feeding programmes for rare cranes are now critical in the species' conservation; the sad tale of declining numbers of Blakiston's Fish Owl *Ketupa blakistoni* due to lack of nesting sites, a story which may yet have a happy ending as man-made nest boxes are erected; and the heartening news that there is now a population of at least 200 Short-Tailed Albatrosses *Diomedea albatrus* which can be seen off the coast of Japan - a bird thought extinct at the turn of the century.

Some members brought along slides for the photo-spot, which included Biddulph's Ground Jay *Podoces biddulphi* from China. There was a slide and sound competition and a display of artwork.

DUTCH BIRDING



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News and Views

DIRECTORY OF ASIAN WETLANDS PUBLISHED

IUCN has recently published what is surely one of the most important directories ever for the conservation of wetlands. *The Directory of Asian Wetlands* represents the culmination of a three-year project which was sponsored by IWRB, IUCN and ICBP, and funded by WWF-International. The massive directory provides information on 947 sites in 22 countries ranging from a half-hectare tank in Bangladesh to the three million hectare complex of lakes at Chang Tang in Tibet. The conservation situation varies from country to country. In several countries in the region such as Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, and Brunei, large wetlands exist comparatively untouched (although unprotected), whilst in countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, wetlands have come under threat. The Directory is available from IUCN Publications Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL, UK.

(Source: World Bird-watch Vol.11, No.1.)

FUEL CRISIS IN NEPAL

A trade dispute between India and Nepal which has been going on since March is causing serious worries for conservationists, as fuel becomes scarce in Nepal and more trees are cut down to meet the demand.

Landlocked Nepal is dependent for its trade with the outside world on 21 trading points along the Indo-Nepalese border. When the two countries' trade and transit treaties ran out in March this year, India closed all but two of the border posts and banned most exports to Nepal. India and Nepal have enjoyed a close relationship for centuries, formalised by the signing of a Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1950. However India claims that many of Nepal's actions in recent years are against the letter and spirit of the Treaty. The Nepalese say they have followed a policy of peaceful co-existence and non-alignment and have tried to diversify their trade so they would not be economically dependent on one country.

On top of the closures, a go-slow on the part of India at the two open entry points means that very little transit traffic is now reaching Nepal. The effects on Nepal's economy and environment have been severe and are predicted to be disastrous if the dispute continues much longer. Very few development projects are now moving forward and this must cause lasting damage in one of the world's poorest countries. There is now an acute shortage of fuel for transport and of kerosene which is widely used for cooking in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, and in the country's protected areas. People are now forced to use wood for cooking and as a result the demand for firewood has increased five-fold. Between 60 and 300 hectares of forest

are being cut every day to meet this increase. Bearing in mind the already high rate of deforestation in Nepal, this is a disturbing development.
(Contributed by Carol Inskipp)

PROPOSED NATIONAL PARK IN DARJEELING

Members who have walked the Sandakphu trek in Darjeeling will be pleased to hear that the entire area is included within the newly proposed Singalila National Park. The Singalila ridge, which marks the boundary between Nepal and India, also divides a heavily deforested area from a well forested one. Singalila has had 'reserved forest' status in the past and this new move will hopefully ensure its permanent protection and proper management.

A recent bird list for the park has been collated from reports in the OBC information files and forwarded to Dr. Brij Raj Sharma in Darjeeling. The list, numbering over 160 species so far, includes Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra*, Blue-fronted Robin *Cinclidium frontale*, Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler *Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*, Black-headed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius rufiventer*, Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis*, Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor* and Dark-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus edwardsii*.

Members who have information on the area and wish to assist with the further collection of records for the Park bird list should contact OBC's Information Officer, Craig Robson, at the Club's address.



Proposed Singalila Park & the Sandakphu trek, Darjeeling.

DISTURBING DATA FROM INDONESIA

A campaign to save Indonesia's tropical forests is being run by APPEN, the Asia-Pacific People's Environment Network and their latest report includes some disturbing facts on industrial development.

Indonesia currently has the second largest expanse of rainforest in the world, but in the last 20 years some 54 million hectares have been lost and it is predicted that if the current rate of deforestation continues, the last trees will be gone within 50 years.

According to the widely distributed Indonesian magazine, *Editor*, of the present 143 million hectares of forest, nearly half, 64 million hectares, are under logging concessions to 543 concession-holders. Most of these are joint ventures between domestic investors and foreign trans-national companies which are together responsible for the loss of 900 000 ha of forest each year. Deforestation activities are still financed by several development agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and others.

Gold mining is also causing dramatic damage to Indonesia's rainforest. Many mining companies from Australia, USA and other developed countries have been granted mining concessions the size of which varies from 900 000 ha to 3 million hectares, larger than the largest logging concessions. The technique they use is alluvial soil washing, and even though only an estimated 10% of the licensed area will be mined, the ecological impact will be devastating.

APPEN suggests that one way to ease the pressure on the rainforests would be to put into practice UNEP's idea for a global trust fund to be set up to save tropical rainforests. The fund would compensate tropical countries who protect their forest from logging in recognition that they are providing a global service.

(Source: APPEN Action Report 5/89/14-M)

MANAS SANCTUARY UNDER SIEGE

The Sanctuary of Manas in Assam, India, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the second largest of India's Project Tiger reserves, is facing a major threat to its existence as a result of its occupation by an extremist faction of Bodo tribesmen. The tribesmen invaded the park in February as part of their struggle against the Government of Assam to establish an independent homeland and claim civil rights they say they are now denied. Armed with automatic weapons in addition to their traditional bows and arrows, they have, according to media reports, slaughtered wildlife and killed park staff, opening the park to rhino poachers and loggers. At least nine park staff are reported murdered and at least 30 from a total of 44 guard posts have been abandoned or overrun, including one of the main range offices at Panbari. At least six and probably more of the reserve's 80 Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, two male Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* and at least four Tigers *Panthera tigris* have been shot. Within weeks of the invasion more than 1000 logs from commercially valuable tree species were seized in local towns.

Manas Tiger Reserve is one of Asia's most important protected areas, mainly because of its large size (2837 sq. km) with an additional 443 sq. km in the adjoining Bhutan Manas Sanctuary. It is also important because it protects some of the last grasslands in the subcontinent. The reserve is home to more than 300 species of birds including the globally threatened Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* and Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*. It is also especially important for nineteen species of mammal listed on schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act including species such as Golden Langur *Presbytis geei*, Capped Langur *P. pileatus*, Wild Buffalo *Bubalus bubalis*, Hispid Hare *Caprolagus hispidus* and Pygmy Hog *Sus salvanius*. In addition the reserve contains a population of 123 Tigers (1984 census), and the world's third largest surviving population of Indian Rhinoceros, an estimated 80 animals.

The Chief Conservator for Manas, Mr Deb Roy, has appealed for more money and police help, conceding that his forest guards were ill-equipped and lacked the training to deal with armed insurgents, who at times numbered in their hundreds.

The £130 000 pledged by the New Delhi central government to provide equipment, including vehicles and munitions, is currently still tied-up in the bureaucracy. Central Police were despatched by the Assam state government to the site but they have only been able to deal with the human consequences of the uprising. In the past eight months there have been 500 deaths among Bodos and Assamese villagers as a result of Bodo terrorist activities.

The lack of positive and decisive action to halt the destruction of Manas is mainly due to a political clash between the Congress (I) government in New Delhi and the Assam state government. The central government has not yet responded to the Assam state government's request for the deployment of a special force to Manas. The Assam government claims that New Delhi is actually providing support for the Bodos in order to reduce the standing of the state government in the general election at the end of the year. If the government fails to take action soon, not only may Manas suffer catastrophically but this may set a precedent, leading to the invasion of other protected areas.

(Source: compiled by Jon Eames from reports in *BBC Wildlife* and *Sunday Telegraph*).

WESTERN TRAGOPAN FIND

Survey work carried out earlier this year identified the world's largest-known surviving population of the endangered Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus* in the Palas Valley of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province.

Over the last three years a number of surveys have identified significant but small populations which have increased the species' known numbers and distribution. This year's remarkable discovery puts most previously known sites into the shade.

Between 8 and 22 June 1989 Guy Duke and Jon Eames, on behalf of ICBP and the World Pheasant Association, together with staff of Pakistan's Zoological Survey Department and NWFP Wildlife Wing, recorded no fewer than 42 calling male birds in a 12 sq. km stretch of forest. Only a fraction of the available habitat was surveyed and 200 pairs of tragopans is considered a highly conservative estimate for this area of forest. This represents at least 10% of the estimated global population of the species.

The habitat is a remarkable surviving remnant of primary Himalayan temperate forest. A uniquely fortuitous combination of factors - precipitous terrain, paucity of alpine pastures, fierce tribal resistance to the exploitative British Raj and, more recently, tribal land disputes (fuelled, ironically, by arguments over timber felling rights) - has served to protect this superb natural environment amidst the otherwise ecologically ravaged Himalaya.

Can we now strike the Western Tragopan from the critically endangered list? Unfortunately not. Commercial logging is prescribed to begin in 1993. (Contributed by Guy Duke)



PITTA NEWS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

A single Whiskered Pitta *Pitta kochi* was seen on Mount Isarog, southern Luzon on 19 March 1988 by S.M. Goodman and P.C. Gonzales. This is believed to be the first definite sighting of the species for over 20 years. Although described as being restricted to northern Luzon by DuPont (1971), single birds have been trapped at Dalton Pass, Nueva Vizcaya in 1967 and at Balian, Laguna in 1964.

CONCERN OVER THAI MARSHLAND

There is much concern in Thailand about the freshwater marsh at Khao Sam Roi Yot. A large section of the marsh (c. 3700 ha) is included in the National Park, but the boundaries are ill-defined, and fish farming has recently made damaging encroachments into the park. The expansion of the fish-farming industry in the region not only threatens the marsh, but is also against the interests of poorer villagers who at present fish there and harvest vegetation for their own use.

(Contributed by Shunji Usui.)

FIRST CRESTED IBIS HATCHED AT PEKING ZOO

The first Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon* to be bred in captivity hatched at Beijing Zoo recently, China's official news agency Xinhua reported.

The Crested Ibis, which had been feared extinct, was found breeding in a remote area of the Qinling mountains in Shaanxi province in 1981, when seven birds were discovered. Another colony was discovered in 1984 in an even more remote region of Qinling, and now 48 birds besides the chick at Beijing are known to exist, according to Xinhua. These include six at Beijing Zoo, which have been taken from Qinling since 1986, and two in Japan. The Beijing birds are not on public display.

A four-year old bird laid two eggs on June 13 and 15, and the eggs were at least partially artificially incubated. One chick hatched on July 10, but unfortunately the other egg was accidentally destroyed by the mother bird during incubation.

(Source: compiled by Michael Rank from Xinhua news agency report)

PELICAN BREAKS MARTIAL LAW IN CHINA

A pelican *Pelecanus sp.* broke martial law by landing in Beijing's Tiananmen Square without official permission, and was punished by being confined for life in the city zoo. A soldier who approached the bird was rewarded with a bite on the face, but the bird was eventually caught and taken to the zoo under military escort, according to the *Peking Evening News* (21 September 1989). This appears to be the first pelican seen in Beijing since the 1930's according to *The Birds of Beijing* by Cai Qikan (Beijing 1988, in Chinese).

(Contributed by Michael Rank)

SINO-SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

A Chinese ornithologist has proposed that China and the Soviet Union sign an agreement to protect migratory birds. The official Xinhua news agency quoted Song Shengli as saying in Harbin that such an agreement was urgently needed and should involve protection of habitat, exchange of information and the establishment of reserves. China and Japan signed an agreement on migratory birds, covering 230 species in March 1981.

(Source: Compiled by Michael Rank from Xinhua 27 September 1989)

Watching Bustards in India

The Great Indian Bustard, India's best-known endangered bird, has eight sanctuaries and several conservation areas set aside for its protection. Asad Rahmani describes three of these where this magnificent bird, as well as other species of bustard, can be seen relatively easily and discusses other birds the observer is likely to encounter.

Bustards Otididae are one of the most fascinating groups of birds. Their fantastic courtship display, extraordinary sexual size dimorphism, erratic movements, and their liking for vast, open spaces - all add an aura of excitement to their life cycle. In recent years, many bustard species have become quite rare, thus bringing the birds to the attention of conservationists.

In India, five species of bustard are found, of which the Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* is the most famous. (The other four species are: Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica*; Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*; the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* which is a winter visitor; and a vagrant, the Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*). The Great Indian Bustard, sometimes simply called a GIB, can rightly claim to be the best known endangered bird of India. Even the general public know about this bird. An international seminar on the Great Indian Bustard was organised in 1980, which further highlighted the plight of this species. It has been declared a state bird of Rajasthan and features on a stamp printed by the Government of India. Soon a coin will be minted to further popularise this bird. The Great Indian Bustard has the unique distinction among Indian birds of having at least eight major sanctuaries and a few conservation areas for its protection (a few more areas are under consideration¹). Many people are interested to see this grand bird in the wild, and the three sanctuaries below are probably the best places to do so.

Desert National Park

The 3,162 sq. km Desert National Park in Jaisalmer and Barmer districts of Rajasthan is the largest protected area for the Great Indian Bustard. The Park was declared in 1981. Subsequently, when it was found impossible to protect the whole area because of high human and livestock populations, the park authorities developed many core areas where human interference was minimal. These core areas are now utilised by the bustards. Almost every 20 km there is a core area with a guard post. The most popular core area is Sudasari, 65 km from Jaisalmer town. During winter, 10-20 bustards can be seen easily in a day. A comfortable hide facing the much-visited (by animals) waterhole makes a trip to Sudasari quite fruitful. Bustards have obliged almost all the bird photographers who have spent a day in this hide. Once I counted 17 birds around the hide and waterhole.

During winter in addition to the Great Indian Bustard, one can also see the Houbara Bustard, various species of raptors, sandgrouse *Pterocles*, larks *Alaudidae* and finches *Fringillidae*. Chinkara or Indian Gazelle *Gazella dorcas* is resident and very common. The best season to visit the Park is winter (November to February). Four-wheel drive vehicles can be hired at Jaiselmer, and basic lodging facilities are available in most of the core areas.

Sonkhaliya Closed Area

The second most important bustard area in Rajasthan is Sonkhaliya, which was declared in 1980 as a closed area for shooting. This 17 sq. km protected area on the Nazirabad to Kekri road, is 40 km from Ajmer, which is connected by road and train to Jaipur and Delhi. Unlike the Desert National Park, tourist facilities are not developed in Sonkhaliya. The whole area is under agriculture and belongs to villagers. There is no core area where the bustards can be seen undisturbed. Nevertheless, bustards are doing well and some of the largest flocks are seen there. I have seen 29 Bustards in two adjoining crop fields. The Forest Department claims that there are nearly 80 bustards in the area.

The best time to visit Sonkhaliya is winter when the bustards flock and can be seen in fields of Rocket *Eruca sativa* and Bengal Gram *Cicer arietinum*. Other interesting birds seen in the area are the Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, and three crane species; the resident Sarus *Grus antigone*, and the migrants Demoiselle *Anthropoides virgo* and Common Crane *Grus grus*. During the monsoon season the enigmatic Lesser Florican comes to breed in this area.



Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* (drawing by Martin Woodcock)

Tourists are generally not encouraged to go to Sonkhaliya but keen birdwatchers can be granted special permission to go by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Ajmer. A four-wheel drive vehicle is necessary to get around in the area. Local guides are available with the permission of forest department officials.

Karera Bustard Sanctuary

Karera is one of the finest bustard sanctuaries of India with a resident population of up to 30 Great Indian Bustards in a 202 sq. km area. This sanctuary, declared in 1981, is in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh. Karera town is on the Shivpuri to Jhansi road. The boundary of the sanctuary starts 3 km north of the town, but the main bustard area is about 20 km away.

The best time to visit Karera is in spring (March-April) when bustards start displaying in some selected areas and seeing them is guaranteed. However, as the birds are resident, they may be seen throughout the year. In winter, the birds move in flocks and sometimes go out of the sanctuary. Thanks to a retinue of forest guards and watchmen, locating the bustards, even if they have moved away to a new place, is not difficult. I recommend two to three days stay in this sanctuary because there are many things to see and photograph.



Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* (drawing by Carl da Silva)

From Delhi, Karera is the nearest place to see the Great Indian Bustard. Karera is directly connected to Gwalior (130 km), Shivpuri (52 km) and Jhansi (45 km). Gwalior is only 110 km from Agra (famous for the Taj Mahal), and Agra is 65 km from the popular Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary. Almost all birdwatchers visiting India go to Bharatpur. They can include Karera in their itinerary as it is only half a day's drive away.

Basic boarding and lodging facilities are available at Karera and a trip to the bustard area can be arranged by the Superintendent of the sanctuary who resides at Karera. An added attraction of Karera is the presence of Dihaila Jheel where up to a hundred thousand waterfowl can be seen during winter². Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* and Chinkara are common at Karera and can be seen at close quarters.

Apart from the three bustard sanctuaries described above, there are a few more sanctuaries, like Nanaj in Solapur district (Maharashtra State) and Rollapadu in Kurnool district (Andhra Pradesh State), where the Great Indian Bustard can be seen. However, the bustards are not resident at Nanaj or Rollapadu, and are mainly seen during the monsoon season (July-October). Moreover, frequent failure of rainfall in these areas (both places are drought-prone) makes bustard sightings unpredictable so they are not recommended for birdwatchers with limited time at their disposal.

References

1. Rahmani, A. R. (1987a) Protection for the Great Indian Bustard *Oryx* 21: 174-179.
2. Rahmani, A. R. (1987b) *Dihaila jheel: Conservation strategies*. Technical Report No. 12. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay.

Asad R. Rahmani, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheet Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023, India.

* Footnote

Since this article was written in 1987, conditions in the Karera Bustard Sanctuary have deteriorated. The author estimates that there are now no more than 15 bustards left. This, it is thought, is largely because of the vast increase in the population of Black Buck *Antelope cervicapra* which has resulted in damage to villagers' crops. Villagers are blaming bustards for the damage, and now chase them from their land, something which did not occur in the past.

Making Surveys Useful for Conservation

OBC's Conservation Officers, Carol Inskipp and Paul Jepson, outline some ideas for short survey work which OBC members could usefully undertake in the Oriental region.

You don't need to spend several months undertaking careful research, to collect data which will be of use for conservation. While longer surveys, are likely to be more valuable, even a few days spent in the field in the Orient can be useful, especially when bearing in mind the information that conservationists need most urgently.

This article contains a summary of work which would be valuable to carry out in the Oriental region and which could realistically be undertaken by OBC members on a relatively short field trip. In the main these ideas for useful work have been suggested by our country representatives. They are not intended to set or indicate priorities for conservation in the countries concerned, but highlight where new data would currently be most helpful.

Indonesia - suggestions from Derek Holmes and Bas van Balen.

Specific opportunities for study are difficult to identify because of the sheer magnitude of the task; the entire Republic of Indonesia awaits ornithological field study. Few regions have adequate identification guides and there is no definitive national bird list.

The situation is highlighted in *Birds to Watch*, ICBP's list of the world's threatened birds, which has awoken us to the alarming fact that Indonesia has a longer list of threatened species than any other country, and nearly half of those listed consist of Wallacean endemics whose current status is unknown. This is not perhaps surprising in view of the sheer size of Indonesia's avifauna, but it does emphasise the urgent need for survey work in this country where few of the lesser islands have been visited by ornithologists in recent decades.

Travel to the remote regions requires funds, time and patience. A study of at least three weeks is really needed to enable observers to familiarise themselves with the avifauna and achieve useful results.

Hong Kong - suggestions from David Melville.

A short study with telescope and notebook, of the feeding ecology of Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes* would give valuable information for the local conservation of the species. At present next to nothing is known about this subject save the details from observations by Ron Murton in c. 1969.

Nepal - suggestions from Carol Inskipp.

Surveys are needed in all the following areas:

1. Tropical evergreen forests in the south-east lowlands.

This is one of the few major forest habitat types which still remains unprotected in Nepal.

2. Under-recorded protected areas.

A good knowledge of the occurrence and status of bird species will be useful for the better management of the following areas: Khaptad, Rara, Shey-Phoksundo and Royal Bardia National Parks; Shivapuri watershed, Parsa and Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserves; and Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve. It will also make it possible to discover which bird species still require habitat protection.

3. Kosi Barrage area and Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserve.

Here surveys are required to locate the internationally threatened Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis* and Hodgson's Bushchat *Saxicola insignis*.

4. Barun Valley.

General survey work would be useful in the relatively untouched extensive forests of this valley which lies in the Arun Valley watershed in east Nepal. It is a proposed extension area to Sagarmatha National Park.

5. Ghodaghodi Tal.

General survey work is needed in this interesting, but little-known wetland in the western lowlands.

Pakistan - suggestions from Ashiq Ahmad Khan.

1. Migratory Cranes.

Little is known about the resting and roosting sites of migratory cranes. Surveys to identify these would take a few weeks in March and October.

2. Waterfowl.

Some species of waterfowl, such as White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* are thought to be endangered in Pakistan. Surveys are required to assess their true status and distribution. Surveys of species and numbers of waterfowl breeding at high altitude could also provide valuable information.

Philippines - suggestions from Hector Miranda.

1. Currently unprotected habitat types.

Bird surveys could greatly add to what little information is known at present about the following currently unprotected habitat types.

1.1 Mindanao:

The lowland dipterocarp forest of Surigao del Sur/Davao in the Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines (PICOP) logging concession; mid-montane forest around Alah valley, south Cotabato; the remaining lowland forest of south-western Mindanao, including the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao and Zamboanga.

1.2 Luzon

The remaining lowland forest of Isabela/Aurora provinces of the Sierra Madre Mountain range. Accessibility is difficult, but this area is important because of its high biological diversity.

2. Wetland sites for migrant waders and waterfowl.

There is still much to do in identifying wetland sites for migrant waders and waterfowl. Surveys would be valuable in the following areas.

2.1 Luzon.

Boguey area in Cagayan Province, Baler Bay and the coastline of Isabela and Aurora Provinces, and Candaba Marsh in the provinces of Pampanga and Bulacan.

2.2 Visayas group of islands.

Northern Panay, Mactan Island, north-west Bohol and possibly some areas on Negros.

2.3 Mindanao

Liguasan Marsh, Davao Gulf, coastline of Zamboanga del Sur and islands of the Sulu Archipelago.

3. Seabirds.

Tropical seabirds such as the Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* used to inhabit the small offshore islands between Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago, including the Tubataha reefs and Cagayan Sulu Island. Intensive investigation to assess the status of birds on these islands would be most useful.

Thailand - suggestions by Philip Round and Utthai Treesucon.

1. Forests.

In *Resident forest birds in Thailand; their status and conservation* (ICBP Monograph no.2), the following sites are recommended for survey to determine their suitability for nature reserve status.

1.1 Montane habitats at Khao Kha Khaeng in continental Thailand, and Doi Langka - Doi Mae Tho and Doi Phu Kha in northern Thailand.

1.2 Lowland riverine habitat in continental Thailand.

1.3 Lowland semi-evergreen forest at Khao Sam Ngam and Khlong Pun Piak in continental Thailand.

1.4 Surveys in the lowland margins of parks would be useful to help assess the suitability of extending existing protected areas of rainforest in Peninsular Thailand.

1.5 Mangrove inlets along the coast of Chanthaburi and Trat Provinces.

2. Riparian species in lowland streamside habitats.

Most areas for this category of work are outside parks and sanctuaries, and surveys would be concentrated in the northern provinces of Mae Hongson, Chiangmai, Lampang, Nan and Phra Uttaradit. A record of species present and densities of selected species would be useful. Particular attention should be paid to: Crested Kingfisher *Ceryle lugubris*, Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis* and other kingfishers, as well as birds nesting on sandbanks, such as Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda*, River Tern *S. aurantia*, and the White-eyed River Martin *Pseudochelidon sirintarae*.

3. Migratory raptors.

Useful raptor watches could be mounted in many sites in Thailand.

4. Water surveys.

There are very few data even for key sites. Surveys should be concentrated during the periods August to October and March to May.

5. Nesting terns and other seabirds.

Islets in many areas could be easily and usefully surveyed for nesting terns and seabirds. Records of nesting Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* would be particularly welcome as there are no recent records.

6. Colonies of nesting waterbirds in central plains.

Principal survey activity should be between July and December.

7. Seasonal status surveys in north-west montane areas.

Surveys could usefully determine the true status of the following species which have only been recorded in winter, but which may be resident: Speckled Woodpigeon *Columba hodgsonii*, Aberrant Bush-Warbler *Cettia flavolivacea*, Slaty-Blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor* and Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum melanoxanthum*.

8. Forests in the extreme southern provinces.

Useful surveys would determine whether any patches of lowland forest might support Garnet Pitta *Pitta granatina*, Grey-chested Flycatcher *Rhinomyias umbratilis*, and other species whose distribution is restricted to this region. On forested hill slopes, surveys of Rhinoceros Hornbill *Buceros rhinoceros* are needed.

Members interested in carrying out any of the surveys listed above should write to OBC's Conservation Officers at the OBC address for specific guidance, and for details of how to write up their fieldwork and where to send results.

Asian Wetlands - suggestions from Crawford Prentice.

In addition to the suggestions above, the Asian Wetland bureau would welcome information from surveys carried out by OBC members. Earlier this year they identified the following priorities for information.

1. Little known habitats:

Swamp forests in Indonesia, Malaysia and Peninsular Thailand; freshwater marshes in Indonesia, east Malaysia, and especially in the Philippines; coastal mangroves and mudflats in Indonesia, east Malaysia, Philippines, Indochina, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China.

2. Priority areas for wetland and waterbird surveys:

Philippines - Palawan and Mindanao; Thailand - south-east and west coast and central lakes and rivers; the coasts of Viet Nam, Bangladesh and Pakistan; in China - the Jiansu coast, and the peat swamps and freshwater lakes of the Yellow River delta; wetlands in Malaysia; in South Korea - coastal areas with special attention to records of wintering waterfowl; the coast and swamps of Riau province, central Sumatra and of Kalimantan in Indonesia.

3. Inventory projects.

The AWB can supply sheets to record data on key and little-known sites for use in their national and Asian wetland inventories.

Anyone interested in the work suggested in this last section should write for more details to the Projects Manager, Asian Wetland Bureau, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, Lembah Pantai, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The summary in the first section of this article, extensive as it is, only covers five countries in the Oriental region. Amassing the base-line information from which effective conservation programmes can be formulated is clearly a daunting task. This is the challenge for the 1990s which faces all of us interested in Oriental ornithology. While survey work may not always reward the observer with a lengthy species list, it can offer some of the most challenging and satisfying birdwatching and travel; and the real reward of knowing that you have contributed something worthwhile to conservation efforts.

We hope OBC members will rise to this challenge and we look forward to hearing from anyone wanting to contribute.

Carol Inskipp and Paul Jepson, OBC Conservation Officers, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

Applications for OBCs survey grants to assist in carrying out any of the work suggested in this article would be welcomed, especially from nationals in the Orient. These OBC grants are unlikely to exceed £200 and are aimed at alleviating the extra costs incurred in reaching remote areas, the hiring of local guides and so on. Recipients of survey grants are expected to produce a written report which will be made available to relevant government bodies and conservation organisations. They will also be encouraged to publish the results of their projects in either *Forktail* or the *Bulletin*.

Discovering Cuc Phuong

Situated only three hours journey time south-west of Hanoi, Cuc Phuong National Park offers the visiting ornithologist unrivalled opportunities to observe a wide range of Indo-Chinese and endemic bird species. Although presently not open to foreign tourists, a rapidly changing political situation may render it accessible in the not too distant future.

Cuc Phuong National Park was the first national park to be designated in Viet Nam. Established in 1962, the park covers 25 000 ha, of which 20 000 ha are still forested. The park is situated only 120 km south-west of Hanoi, just three hours journey-time for those with access to a private vehicle.

The route to Cuc Phuong National Park begins on Highway 1, Viet Nam's principal north-south route linking Hanoi with Saigon. Eighty kilometres further south the road passes through the hamlet of Ha Nam, notable for its roadside government restaurant. From here, a small surfaced road heads west off the main highway.

For some 40 km, the road continues to weave its way through the flat and verdant rice-growing lowlands. Few birds are found here, although flocks of White-shouldered Starlings *Sturnus sinensis* and Crested Mynas *Acridotheres cristatellus* can be seen in the fields during the summer.

The road then begins to climb through the low-lying spurs of the Annamatic chain, which penetrate finger-like into the coastal plain. After traversing a low pass, the road enters a flat valley, surrounded on all sides by steep forest-covered limestone hills and reminiscent of scenery in southern Thailand. The route follows the cultivated valley floor, passing numerous villages of H'mong tribespeople, before finally reaching the park headquarters.

The H'mong people practice shifting slash and burn agriculture. Over the generations their activities have significantly modified the vegetation leaving extensive grassy clearings in the valley bottom. In addition, the H'mong have traditionally hunted mammals and larger birds in the park area. However, since 1987 the park authorities have undertaken a policy of removing settlements from the park's core area and relocating them towards the fringes of the protected area, at the same time encouraging them to adopt agricultural techniques requiring permanent plots. This policy has created a relatively undisturbed core-area to the park; only visited by scientists and the occasional H'mong hunting party. Forest cover in the valley has also been reduced over the last 50 years by commercial logging which has now ceased.

The vegetation of Cuc Phuong is classed as lowland and sub-montane seasonal evergreen sub-tropical forest. However in parts of the central valley, the forest structurally resembles lowland tropical rainforest. The sheltered aspect of Cuc Phuong, high soil fertility and retention of high humidity in the valley has permitted the retention of a relict flora with some Malaysian

elements. Dominant tree families include; Dipterocarpaceae, Fabaceae, Meliaceae, Sapindaceae and Lauraceae. Some 1850 species of vascular plant representing more than 160 plant families have been identified. Triassic limestone strata underlie much of the park so that, despite an annual rainfall of 2.2 m, there is little surface water. The karst landscape is intersected with subterranean rivers and grottos. Some small streams are to be found but even they disappear during the driest months of December and January. Altitude within the park varies from 150 m to 637 m. Temperatures vary seasonally from 9°C to 35°C, with the average temperature a balmy 21°C.

For the ornithologist, the park's strategic location on the boundary of two zoogeographical regions, West Tonkin and North Annam, combined with the unique physical conditions which permit the re-emergence of Malaysian faunal elements, produces a particularly interesting and diverse range of species. In addition, the Cuc Phuong forests contain elements of Palaearctic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Burmese avifaunas. Where else in Asia can one see Great Spotted Woodpecker *Picoides major*, Brown Hornbill *Ptilolaemus tickelli*, Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron cinereum* and White-winged Magpie *Urocissa whiteheadi* in the same tree?

Cuc Phuong provides some of the most exciting and rewarding birdwatching anywhere in South East Asia. There are many specialities to be seen as well as other species which are uncommon elsewhere within their range. The park's location on the eastern edge of the Annamatic Mountain chain, also means that an interesting movement of Palaearctic migrants can be observed.

A network of good trails permits a leisurely exploration of the park. One particularly good trail starts near the Bong sub-station. It passes first through a grassy clearing, resonating to the calls of Red-vented Barbet *Megalaima lagrandieri*. This is also a good place to look out for Pied Falconet *Microhierax malanoleucos* and flocks of Pin-tailed Pigeons *Treron apicauda* flying overhead. The trail then enters the forest, crossing several small streams and winding its way over numerous ridges. After 4 km it ends at a large forest emergent, rising over 50 m from the forest floor and with a girth of more than 4 m.

By walking this trail over three or four days the birdwatcher is likely to see and hear the following species; Malayan Night Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus*, Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera*, Grey Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum*, Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithacus*, Red-collared Woodpecker *Picus rabieri*, Blue-rumped Pitta *Pitta soror*, Bar-bellied Pitta *P. ellioti*, Eared Pitta *P. phayrei*, White-tailed Flycatcher *Cyornis concreta*, Limestone Wren-Babbler *Napothera crispifrons*, Rufous-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe rufogularis*, Fork-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga christinae*, White-winged Magpie, Eastern Green Magpie *Cissa (thalassina) hypoleuca*, Green Magpie *C. chinensis* and Ratchet-tailed Treepie *Temnurus temnurus*.

A visit in the months from November to April will, in addition to resident birds, yield numerous over-wintering Palaearctic species such as Olive Tree-Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, Light-

vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis*, Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* and Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*. During March and April visible migration of larger birds such as Eastern Marsh-Harrier *Circus spilonotus* and Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* is evident, as is the presence of migrant passerines such as Siberian Blue Robin *Erithacus cyane*, Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*, Narcissus Flycatcher *Ficedula narcissina* and Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*; birds which have spent the winter further south and are moving northwards to their breeding grounds.

The month of July is a good time to observe the immense variety of butterflies which congregate in huge clouds around the rapidly evaporating pools. An especially good place to observe these is along the driveable track leading through the park. Among the more spectacular species to be seen are Paris Peacock *Papilio paris*, Green Dragontail *Lamproptera meges*, Yellow Gorgon *Meandrusa payeni*, Red Helen *Papilio helenus* and Fivebar Swordtail *Graphium antiphates*.

Visitors to the park will be struck by the scarcity of larger birds such as hornbills Bucerotidae and the apparent lack of primates. However, the park does provide a refuge for one of the world's rarest primates; the endangered Tonkin Leaf-Monkey *Trachypithecus francoisi*. Claims that large mammals such as Tiger *Panthera tigris* are still to be found in the park are unlikely to be true. The park is too small to support a viable population and heavy hunting pressure from the H'mong armed principally with cross-bows but also with firearms, has rendered most medium-sized herbivores very rare or extinct. However Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Asiatic Black Bear *Selenarctos thibetanus* and Mainland Serow *Capricornis sumatraensis* probably remain. The Marbled Cat *Felis marmorata*, Black Giant Squirrel *Ratufa bicolor*, Belly-banded Squirrel *Callosciurus (erythraeus) flavimanus* and Himalayan Striped Squirrel *Tamiops macclellandi* are certainly still present.

Facilities for tourists within the park, and indeed in Viet Nam as a whole have not been developed. It is not yet possible to travel to Viet Nam as an independent tourist and no commercial birdwatching tour groups have yet been to Cuc Phuong. However it may not be too far into the future before this situation changes and once the country does open its doors to foreign visitors, five days spent at Cuc Phuong will certainly rank as a major ornithological highlight for all Oriental bird freaks.

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Little-known Oriental Bird



EYE-BROWED PARROTBILL

In this article, Michael Rank summarises recent writings, which he has translated, of a number of Chinese biologists on the Eye-browed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis heudei*. Little has been written about the bird in China save what was published by Lynes in 1914 but, as the author shows, research in China has provided much new information.

The range of the Eye-browed Parrotbill is considerably wider than was once thought, according to three articles recently published in China.

The species was originally described by the French ornithologist Pere David in 1872⁴ from a specimen in the collection of a missionary in Shanghai, Pere Heude. In 1891 Styan²¹ recorded the bird in winter on reed-covered islands near Nanjing (Nanking) when the 'dry reeds are standing in masses from ten to fifteen feet in height', and in 1906 La Touche¹¹ found it was very common in winter in reedbeds near Zhenjiang (Chinkiang).

Following his observations made in 1910 - 1912 Lynes published a paper in 1914¹³ which established that the Eye-browed Parrotbill is sedentary. He clearly showed in a detailed table how the bird is dependent on the reedbed habitat found in the lower Chang Jiang (River Yangtse), and identified the 70 mile stretch of river between Nanjing and Zhenjiang with some 150 square miles of this reedbed habitat as being 'the only known home of *P. heudei*'.

His field observations and examination of some twenty gizzard contents showed that in the months of November, December, January, February, April and June, 'their food is entirely insects and their larvae'. He clearly spent some time watching the birds feeding and described how the birds use their massive bill to tear away at the reeds to find the insects inside. In early June Lynes found nests with eggs which he describes in some detail.

Neufeldt and Wunderlich¹⁵ in their 1982 publication pick up on one or two other early papers which add to the bird's known range. Gould⁷ recorded the bird in Jiujiang (Kiukiang) much further upriver than other reports, and Shaw¹⁷ observed it near Hangzhou (Hanchow). Gee *et.al.*⁶ recorded *P. heudei* in Jiangyin. In the late 1960s the species was believed to be extremely rare or even extinct and to survive if at all only in the lower Chang Jiang valley²².

In 1973, Polivanov *et al.*¹⁶ collected specimens of *P. heudei* in the Soviet Far East, in reedbeds in the Lake Khanka basin on the Sino-Soviet border, the first discovery having been made in August 1968. Stepanyan¹⁹ described this population in more detail and came to the conclusion that it constituted a separate sub-species *P. heudei polivanovi*. A colour picture was published of the new sub-species in Knystautas *et al.*⁹ and Knystautas and Šibnev¹⁰ published another superb colour photograph of a bird feeding young on the

nest in 1987. They also estimated the size of the Lake Khanka population to be between 600 and 700 individuals, although Neufeldt and Wunderlich put it at only 60 to 80 breeding pairs. The latter quote Šibnev as saying that at one site near the lake only one pair was confirmed in early 1973, where there had been 12 nests a few months earlier, due to draining of the rice paddies and harvesting of the reeds. *P. h. polivanovi* has also recently been discovered in Inner Mongolia (Nei Monggol Zizhiqu) by Per Alstrom and Urban Olsson¹ and is presumably also found on the Chinese side of Lake Khanka (known as Lake Xingkai in Chinese) in Heilongjiang province². Cheng² says *P.h.polivanovi* has also been recorded from the Qiqihar / Zhalong area some 500 km west of Lake Khanka. The 42 000 ha Zhalong reserve is well-known for its Red-crowned Cranes *Grus japonensis*.

Another population of the species was discovered at about the same time, in Mongolia⁵ and Stepanyan²⁰ subsequently described this as a new sub-species *P.h.mongolicus*.

The larger known range of the species led to its inclusion in *Birds to Watch*³ only as a near-threatened species but *P.heudei heudei* was listed as endangered and in urgent need of protection in the 1979 edition of the *Red Data Book*⁸. It is on this nominate subspecies that the Chinese papers provide new information.

The first of the three Chinese papers recently published on the bird is by Ma Shiquan and Sun Zhongquan¹⁴ of the Shanghai Technological Teachers' Institute's Biology department. They outline how there have been no confirmed records of the bird in the Chang Jiang estuary since Gee *et al.*'s records^{24,25} and that in the 1950s in a fairly thorough survey of the birds of Shanghai Li Zhi-xun *et al.*¹² did not come across any.

However in April 1983 Ma and Sun found a few Eye-browed Parrotbills during a survey of the coast of Fengxian county south of Shanghai, and in January 1984 they discovered a number at Luchaogang in Nanhui county, also south of Shanghai. In September of that year they found more on the east of Chongming island, in the mouth of the Chang Jiang. These discoveries were the first in the Shanghai area, and show that the Eye-browed Parrotbill still occurs in the lower Chang Jiang. Ben King and others had close views of the birds near Shanghai earlier this year, when they were accompanied by Ma Shiquan.

The south bank of the Chang Jiang estuary near Shanghai is a low-lying alluvial plain crossed by rivers. Sandbanks covered with reedbeds stretch along the coast, riverbanks and estuary, and Chongming island is surrounded by fairly large sandbanks. In Nanhui and Fengxian counties the coastline is rather open and the marshland has been reclaimed for farming; the uncultivated area is shrinking daily. The area in Fengxian county where the birds were seen is at the mouth of Jinhui harbour and is surrounded by a sea wall which was built in the late 1970s. It is about 15 km long and 600 to 800 metres wide and of the enclosed land, only one fifth (just over 110 ha) is not yet in use. The reedbed is dense and in spring and summer is flooded for fishponds. Many summer migrant species breed in this habitat, but Ma and Sun did not have any breeding records for *P. heudei* for this area.

Ma and Sun studied the birds over a period of two years and, between winter 1983 and spring 1984, took detailed measurements of ten males and four females. They found males to be slightly larger than females, weighing on average 23.48 gms (± 1.92 gms) standard variation ($n=10$), compared to females which weighed on average 18.25 gms (± 0.50 gms) ($n=4$). Males are on average 192.63 mm (± 4.81 mm) long ($n=8$); 17 mm longer than females, and their tails are much longer averaging 107.13 mm (± 4.67 mm) ($n=8$), while females are 98.13 mm (± 4.55 mm) ($n=4$).

They observed the birds in pairs or small groups in the reedbeds and noted that they sometimes give a 'pi-pa' call as they nibble on reeds. When they disperse the birds often utter a loud 'ju-ju-ju' call which is very helpful in identifying them in the field.

The two other recent papers in Chinese on the bird were both published this year and both describe breeding populations, the existence of which were previously unknown.

Wang Ziyu²³ of the Lianyungang Environmental Protection Office studied the birds in Jiangsu province. In 1983 he recorded *P. heudei* at Xinyanggang in Sheyang county (about 150 km south east of Lianyungang). During 1984 and 1985, in the course of a survey of birds in the Lianyungang area the bird was recorded every month from September to mid-March, and in 1986 during a survey of Jiangsu province the species was seen each month except December and instances of breeding were recorded. During Wang's study in 1986 he observed birds in Dapu, Haichuan, Haizhou, Kongwang Shan, Lianfang, Punan, Punan Xiachai, Xinpu and Xintan fishpond. Wang also mentions that Zhou Shi'e (no reference given) collected specimens in the Nanjing and Sheyang areas and also made observations in the Lianyungang area. These records extend the known range of *P. h. heudei* to 34°46'N.

Wang states that the shoreline and former bed of the Huang He (Yellow River) are excellent habitat and breeding grounds of the bird as they consist of large areas of low-lying marshland, reedbeds and lagoons.

Shi Zerong and Cui Guihua¹⁸ worked on the birds between 1986 and 1988 in the buffer zone of Yangcheng Wildlife Reserve in Jiangsu province, about 500 km north of Shanghai, a reserve well-known for its Red-crowned Cranes, but which also has a resident population of Eye-browed Parrotbills in the coastal reedbeds.

They give a detailed account of the birds' behaviour, diet and calls in winter. They recorded flocks of five to 15 birds, the largest flock seen numbering 26 (Wang Ziyu noted a flock of 30 birds), sometimes associating with Vinous-throated Parrotbills *P. webbianus*. The bird is a poor flier and only rises three to 20 metres above the reeds in short bursts of flight of 60 to 200 metres. The birds are active from about six in the morning, flying up and down from the reed stems in search of food. When they feed they make a 'pi-pa' sound as they peck at the reeds together with a cheerful twitter. Every 25 to 30 seconds they strip off one or two leaves and peck at the leaf two or three times. In winter they go to roost as it gets dark but it is unusual to see entire flocks roosting together. They are active for eight to 11 hours a day in winter, but for a shorter period in the rest of the year when food is plentiful.



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Eye-browed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis heudei* feeding (drawing by Lynes¹³, reproduced from *Ibis*, with kind permission from the BOU). Lynes described how 'having inserted the point of the upper mandible in the hole and grasped the reed with wide-straddled feet, it wrenches and twists, swinging the whole weight of the body to open up the insect larder inside'.

Shi and Cui analyzed the stomach contents of seven specimens taken on 22 January 1988. More than 70% consisted of two varieties of insects (translation uncertain); 25% comprised the eggs and wings of the Chinese green mantis and of Orthoptera; and 5% could not be identified.

They heard the Eye-browed Parrotbills calling frequently. A short shrill 'xu xu' is followed by an easily recognisable continuous 'xu xu xu' which starts high and ends low like a whistle and can be heard from 100 m. away. Sometimes the birds produce a harsh sound like a Light-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus sinensis and, when an individual is alarmed or recognises another bird, it utters a deep 'chiu, chiu, chiu' which is less rhythmical than its regular call. Sometimes when a bird has lost contact with the rest of the flock it will utter a very short shrill 'chiu chiu'.

Shi and Cui briefly describe the nest: it is suspended in the reeds, takes six or seven days to build and is slightly smaller than the nest of the Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*, but much more carefully constructed. They observed that the birds generally laid one egg per day in the morning, with a total of two to four eggs to a clutch, and one or two clutches a year. Both parents incubate the eggs for about 12 days and the young stay in the nest for another 12 days. Wang's paper adds the information that the nest is surrounded by reeds which have been nibbled away by the birds and are wilted and so form a clear contrast with the surrounding reeds.

Wang goes on to describe the eggs and development of the young based on two nests found at Kongwang Shan, near Lianyungang; one with five eggs on 3 July and the other with two young on 31 July. By 14 July three brown chicks had hatched from the eggs and by 20 July the chicks weighed 12.5, 12 and 11 gms. They left the nest on the 26th and the next day were still only straying 30 m or so from the nest.

Both Wang's and Shi and Cui's papers stress that the Eye-browed Parrotbill is under severe threat in the area where they studied it. They believe that unless emergency measures are taken, the species will doubtless soon become extinct as a result of the development of the Jiangsu coast and the area along the former Yellow River bed. The threat is serious because the Yancheng area has high priority in China's current development plans and programme to boost export industries. They propose that the local government and relevant departments ensure that a certain area of reedbeds and shore line is left uncut each year so that the birds can winter and feed there. They suggest that where possible, a certain area could be made into reserves to protect the Eye-browed Parrotbill.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Tim Inskipp for drawing my attention to several important references and for making comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Michael Rank, 40 Northchurch Road, London, N1 4EJ, UK.



Birdwatching areas

South Andaman Island

The Andaman Islands have been little-visited in recent years, but as this article shows, it is possible to go there, and a visit there from India can be very interesting.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands lie in the Bay of Bengal about 400 miles south-west of Rangoon in Burma (7° - 15° N, 93° E). Although owned by India, access to the islands is restricted and so the area has been little-visited by ornithologists in recent times. Anne Bose and I decided to include South Andaman (the only island where access is normally allowed) in a two-month visit to southern India. We spent ten days there from 31 January to 9 February 1989.

Visas for South Andaman Island can be obtained from the immigration office in Madras or Calcutta, and take about three days to arrange. They are valid for two weeks only, although it is possible to get a two-week extension. These visas officially restrict you to Port Blair, Wandoor and Jolly Buoys Island. However our permits were checked only on arrival and departure from the island. Apart from this restricted access to South Andaman Island, getting to other islands in the group is at present almost impossible, although luck and persistence may secure a visa for Middle Andaman.

All our travel on the island was by local buses which, if anything, are worse than buses on mainland India. It is possible to fly out to the island but this is very expensive. The alternative is a boat from Madras which takes four days but costs only £5.00. Unfortunately, there were not many birds to be seen from the boat; the only ones seen were two Parasitic Jaegers (Arctic Skuas) *Stercorarius parasiticus* - a rarity in these waters. We could only assume that most of the seabirds recorded from the area are breeding at this time and not wandering round the Bay of Bengal.

There has recently been much immigration to South Andaman from mainland India and consequently the island, unlike many others in the group, has been severely deforested. Of the southern parts of the island that we visited, most of the land has been cleared for agriculture and grazing. Rainforest and mangrove swamp is largely confined to small coastal pockets within the Marine National Park, and the small offshore islands. The birds are more akin to South-East Asia than to India, and several species can be seen here which are not found elsewhere in the Indian Subcontinent, as well as those species endemic to the islands.

We based ourselves at Port Blair in the south of the island. There is a range of accommodation including a youth hostel, hotels and guest houses. There is no rainforest here but we spent some time exploring the coast around

the town, as well as doing several one-day trips to different parts of the island. The town itself is not very interesting for birds, the common species being Philippine Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis*, Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*, White-bellied Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*, Brown Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus*, Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*, Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* and, inevitably House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. However, we frequently saw two of the island's specialities in the trees around the town: the White-headed Starling *Sturnus erythropygius*, a species endemic to the Andamans and Katchal Island; and Brown Coucal *Centropus andamanensis*, a distinctively pale relative of the mainland Greater Coucal *C. sinensis*.

The coastline around the town consists mostly of tidal mudflats with the odd remnant mangrove bush. Here White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* were common: we often saw six or more in the air together. On the exposed mud, Pacific Reef-Egrets *Egretta sacra* were the most common heron, with small numbers of Great *E. alba*, Plumed *E. intermedia* and Little Egrets *E. garzetta*. Collared Kingfishers *Halcyon chloris* are generally birds of mangrove swamp, but they were common all along the coast, even in the dock and port area where we saw them perching on stumps in the mud or, more often, on overhead wires.

Wader passage was just beginning. The most common waders, which we saw every day, were Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Mongolian Plover *C. mongolus*, Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis (dominica) fulva*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. Towards the end of our stay, small flocks of Long-toed Stints *C. subminuta* were appearing daily and we saw one, or possibly two, Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*.

Outside the municipal area of Port Blair we concentrated our efforts on two coastal areas of the Marine National Park, which stretches around much of the southern coastline. The first place, Wandoor, is a two hour bus journey away and was for us a bit of a disappointment. There is some reasonable mangrove forest here but the coastal stretch of rainforest, which is theoretically protected, is still being exploited quite extensively by local villagers for fuel and building materials, and so is very patchy. We did see more White-headed Starlings, Red-breasted Parakeets *Psittacula alexandri*, Vernal Hanging Parrots *Loriculus vernalis*, Olive-backed Sunbirds *Nectarinia jugularis*, Brown Shrikes *Lanius cristatus* and the distinctive, small Andaman race of Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela davisoni*. Grey Teal *Anas gibberifrons* are rumoured to haunt the mangrove swamps in this area but in two days of searching we failed to find any. White-bellied Sea-Eagles were common here, as everywhere on the coast, and the waders were similar to the Port Blair area; Terek Sandpiper again being common with ten or more on the beach.

Wandoor is also notable for being the departure point for Jolly Buoys Island. A boat leaves the jetty daily at 10.30am. The trip to the small island takes about an hour and you get about three hours on the island before the return journey. It is not possible to stay overnight. En route to Jolly Buoys, the boat goes past a stretch of coast which has far better rain and mangrove

forest than at Wandoor but which is, unfortunately, inaccessible by foot. We went past several small, offshore islands which were also completely forested, with mangrove swamp around their perimeters. Still no sightings of Grey Teal, but we did see Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*, Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea* and Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis* from the boat.

Jolly Buoys itself is a very small island. It has good forest cover but it is such a small area that we spent the three hours snorkelling in the superb coral reef among a myriad of multi-coloured fish, corals, sea anenomes, clams and sea slugs. Several Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana* fished above our heads.



Andaman Treepie *Dendrocitta bayleyi* (drawing by John Curson)

The second place we visited, Chidya Tapu at the extreme southern tip of South Andaman a couple of hours drive from Port Blair, was a lot better. Here it is possible to walk through about three miles of virtually untouched coastal rainforest and mangrove swamp to a long, sandy beach. It should be stressed that the rainforest here is in a narrow coastal strip and you only have to walk inland about half a mile (or less in some places) and you find yourself in cleared agricultural land. It was at Chidya Tapu that we saw most of the endemics we were looking for. White-headed Starlings were again common and we saw six or more Andaman Treepies *Dendrocitta bayleyi*, two Andaman Drongos *Dicrurus andamanensis* and three Andaman Serpent-Eagles *Spilornis elgini*. Also seen here were the Andaman subspecies of White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis hodgei* (confusingly, it has a black belly!), White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus albiventris*, and Crested Serpent-Eagle. Other notable species were Mangrove Whistler *Pachycephala cinerea*, Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*, Green-winged Pigeon *Chalcophaps indica*, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*, Olive-backed Sunbird, Green Imperial Pigeon, Philippine Glossy Starling, Black-naped Tern and Long-tailed Parakeet *Psittacula longicauda*. There was an incredibly dazzling variety of butterflies here too, making it probably the best stretch of forest that is readily accessible from Port Blair.

We made one trip to Munjari, 20km from Port Blair on the west coast. The forest here is not as good as at Chidya Tapu but we still saw a number of interesting birds including a few species which we saw nowhere else: Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*, Black-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus atriceps*, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Picoides macei*, and Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*. Other species seen here included the pale Andaman Race of Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae andamana*, White-backed Munia *Lonchura striata*, more White-bellied Woodpeckers, Andaman Drongos, Brown Coucals, Crested Serpent-Eagles, White-bellied Sea-Eagles and a Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis* is the common oriole here).

Species diversity on any island the size of South Andaman is never as great as in comparable areas in mainland Asia. Yet, in ten days, we saw 77 species, including five of the 14 species endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

I would certainly recommend a visit to South Andaman. From India it is like going to South-East Asia for £10 return!

John Curson, 79 Stanmer Park Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 7JL, UK.



Reviews... Reviews.....

Inskipp, C. 1989 **Nepal's Forest Birds: Their Status and Conservation.** International Council for Bird Preservation Monograph No.4. 187 pp. £9.

Land-locked between the Gangetic Plain to the south and the Tibetan Plateau to the north, and with the Great Himalayan range forming its backbone, Nepal is a land of magnificent contrasts, physically, biologically and also culturally. Quite apart from its plethora of magnificent peaks for which this country is perhaps best known, Nepal has a wealth of birds. About 850 species have been recorded to date, nearly one tenth of the world's known birds and probably more for its size than any other country.

Less than one hundred years ago not only were Nepal's lower mountain valleys clothed in forests but also its fertile *terai* or lowlands supported dense tropical forests, largely of sal *Shorea robusta*. The changes have been dramatic. Forests on mountain slopes have contracted, often leaving a narrow temperate band about the middle. This has resulted from year-round overuse of tropical and subtropical resources by villagers from permanent settlements at lower altitudes and the summer activities of transhumant graziers and their livestock in the subalpine and alpine zones. In the plains, forests have been reduced to island patches, surrounded by a sea of agriculture. The influx of humanity into what had been the least densely populated part of the country came about with the eradication of malaria in the early 1950s.

Nepal's forests, which in 1979 covered 43% of the country and mostly comprised less than 40% canopy cover, are vital for the future well-being of its people. The forests provide 87% of the nation's energy requirements, as well as fodder for livestock and timber for construction. In *Nepal's Forest Birds* we are informed further that forests provide habitat for much of the country's diverse avifauna: 77% of 609 breeding species and 67% of wintering species. This amply demonstrates the importance of Nepal's forests for the future of its birds.

Carol Inskipp has dedicated many years to studying Nepal's avifauna and in 1985 she, together with her husband Tim, produced the first complete guide to Nepalese birds. This wealth of information is used in the present publication to assess the status and conservation of forest species.

Following some introductory chapters describing the climate, geography and vegetation of Nepal, conservation measures are assessed in terms of the establishment of a protected areas network and afforestation efforts. Interestingly, improved management of existing low-density forests is believed to have greatest potential, and it is suggested that such a policy would be

much more beneficial to forest birds than planting more trees. In the second half of the book, the status of forest species is assessed and breeding communities within the main forest types are identified. The analysis shows that subalpine and upper temperate forests are internationally most important for breeding birds, supporting the highest numbers of species for which Nepal holds significant world populations, while tropical and subtropical forests are richest in their variety of breeding species but hold the greatest numbers of species considered to be nationally at risk. Species recorded in each of the main forest types are listed in an appendix. Another invaluable body of data are the species lists for each protected area.

There is a little repetition between tables and figures, and some sections are thin. For example, four lines on pesticides barely warrants a section devoted to this topic. Certain of the analyses are not exhaustive. Use of percentages in Table 3, for example, would have revealed which protected areas support most threatened or internationally important breeding species proportionate to the size of their avifauna. Such criticisms are minor and do not detract from the value of this study.

Nepal's present protected areas network of six national parks, five wildlife reserves, one hunting reserve and one conservation area covers a combined area of 13 510 sq.km. This represents 9.6% of total land area, which is higher than for many other Asian countries. The network includes representative samples of the main forest types, outstanding exceptions being subtropical broadleaved and tropical evergreen forests. Such deficiencies could be remedied through protection of the forests of the Mai Valley in east Nepal and Phulchowki Mountain overlooking Kathmandu Valley, which are also among the most important for birds. Action is now being taken to stop quarrying on Phulchowki and protect its remaining forests.

Nepal's Forest Birds is very comprehensive in its coverage and contains a wealth of accurate, up-to-date information, not only of interest to ornithologists but also of fundamental importance to those involved in planning and managing Nepal's forests and protected areas. More studies of this kind are needed, both to quantify the conservation value of tropical forests and to ensure that centres of species diversity and endemism are adequately represented in protected areas networks.

Michael J.B. Green, Protected Areas Data Unit, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK.

Hawkins, R.E. (ed.) 1986 **Encyclopaedia of Indian Natural History**. Pp. 620; 40 plates of photographs (mainly colour), numerous text illustrations. Bombay Natural History Society/Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Rs 245.

This long-awaited centenary publication is at last available, although it is dated 1986. An impressive team of contributors was assembled for this work and the result is a comprehensive and copiously illustrated survey of all aspects of

Indian natural history. The text is, on the whole, authoritative but readable. The ornithological entries are not very demanding and in some cases frustratingly brief. There is, however, something to interest everyone here and all Indiaphiles would be well advised to get a copy of this inexpensive tome.

Nigel Redman

Whitten, A.J., Damanik, S.J., Jazanul Anwar, Nazaruuddin Hisyam 1987 (2nd edition). **The Ecology of Sumatra**. xx + 583 pp. Gadjah Mada University Press, Yogyakarta. £17.40.

Whitten, A.J., Muslimin Mustafa, Henderson, G.S. 1987. **The Ecology of Sulawesi**. xxi + 777 pp. Gadjah Mada University Press, Yogyakarta. £22.65.

These two companion volumes set new standards in ecological literature. No other tropical region has been covered by such comprehensive volumes, and how useful it is that the areas concerned are two of the least known and threatened regions in South East Asia. Both books are profusely illustrated and the text is both informative and well written, drawing on a vast number of scattered sources in several languages and successfully presenting a readable and scholarly synthesis of the ecology of these two diverse islands. The authors and publishers are to be congratulated for their vision, and it is to be hoped that further volumes in the series will follow. Although largely aimed at advanced students and ecologists, there is much here to interest the field ornithologist and conservationist.

Nigel Redman

Gonzales, P.C. and Rees, C.P. 1988 **Birds of the Philippines**. Pp. 184. 133 colour plates. Haribon Foundation, Manila. US\$23.00 (hardback), US\$18.50 (softback).

Compared to many countries in Asia, there is an extensive ornithological literature on the Philippines in terms of scientific papers, although this fascinating country still lacks a field guide. For many years the only 'identification guide' has been duPont's hefty tome, *Philippine Birds*, which was published in 1971. This is not only taxonomically out of date now, but its illustrations leave a lot to be desired.

This new book, boldly titled *Birds of the Philippines*, does not set out to fill the much needed niche of a field guide, but is simply an introduction to the diverse avifauna of the archipelago. Of some 557 species on the Philippine list, just 133 species are covered, but the species selected are generally those most likely to be encountered. However, some less common species are also included, presumably to illustrate as wide a variety of families

as possible. Inevitably in a book such as this, there is an emphasis on the larger, more conspicuous species.

After a brief introduction, the species accounts comprise the bulk of the book. These are arranged by habitat rather than taxonomically and are followed by a short section on endangered species. A whole page is devoted to each species covered and a large colour painting illustrates each. The illustrations are bold and striking, but some of the birds are stiff and awkward. They have been executed by a team of no less than nine local artists, and the differences in style are clearly apparent. There are some problems of scale (the Chestnut Munia *Lonchura malacca* and Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata* look huge) and colour reproduction (the Sulphur-billed Nuthatch *Sitta oenochlamys* has a pink bill), but the overall result is pleasing. A brief text for each species comprises a short description and a section on distribution and habits. At the end of the book there is a three page site guide and a checklist based on a variety of sources. The checklist summarises the status and distribution of all Philippine species and is fairly up to date.

This book is obviously aimed at the beginner and will only be of limited use to the serious birdwatcher. Nevertheless, it is beautifully produced and it is to be hoped that it will indeed help to stimulate an interest in Philippine birds, particularly amongst Filipinos. With all the forest destruction that has already taken place in the Philippines, the remarkable endemic avifauna of these islands needs all the help it can get. I hope that the rather high price will not deter potential buyers.

Nigel Redman

Cocker, P.M. and Inskipp, C. 1989 A Himalayan Ornithologist: The Life and Work of Brian Hodgson Pp. 87; 49 colour plates; Oxford University Press, Oxford. £40.

In the heyday of the British Empire, Brian Hodgson spent 20 years as the East India Company's 'resident' in Kathmandu and a further 14 years at Darjeeling during which time he collected and described 627 bird species, 124 of which were not previously known to science. Two contemporary Himalayan ornithologists writing on the subject of this largely unknown 19th century father of Himalayan ornithology are promising ingredients for a good read. Add to that the inclusion in the book of 49 plates from Hodgson's collection of watercolours commissioned for his own planned *Zoology of Nipal* and you should have a guaranteed success. A pity then that the publishers have ensured that the audience for both Hodgson's paintings and for this appreciation of his life and work will be a small one at the princely price of £40.00.

The watercolours themselves are a delight and would easily justify a book in their own right. Although a fraction of Hodgson's 1612 sheets of birds and mammals held at the Zoological Society of London are reproduced here (49 plates), they are a representative sample. The plates are sandwiched

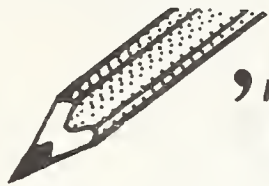
in the middle of the book and carry no captions other than the species name. They would have been better presented as an appendix to the book and some commentary on each would have been a worthwhile addition. The book is otherwise divided into chapters describing Hodgson's life and career with the East India Company, the enormous variety and breadth of his investigations into disciplines other than natural history, his major taxonomic discoveries and the important changes in Nepal's avifauna that have occurred since his studies were made.

Whilst the authors have succeeded in conveying the staggering diversity of Hodgson's interests they are inevitably happiest when dealing with his contribution to ornithology. The title of the book demonstrates their awareness of this fact and serves to emphasize that this all-encompassing interest of the 19th century 'amateur' is difficult for the modern specialist mind to emulate or even comprehend. Hodgson's contributions to the study of Buddhist philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, philology, geography and not least to the political and sociological development of India and Nepal are all covered in this book and there are interesting insights into the politics of Nepal in the early 19th century.

The chapter on 'Changes in birdlife since Hodgson's time' is perhaps of greatest interest to the contemporary ornithologist and tells a familiar story of drainage and deforestation. Hodgson was not able to write in detail upon the status of the birds he collected, but mention of one or two species that he first described for Nepal, such as the Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and the now extinct Pink-headed Duck *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*, will strike a particularly sad note with those who have watched birds in Nepal, and supports the inclusion of a strong conservation message which might otherwise seem inappropriate in a biography.

I would like to have known a little more of the man himself. His childhood is largely ignored by the authors although they make it clear that he was strongly attached to his family. Something in that earlier background perhaps accounts for the absence in Hodgson of that instinct which ensures that great men become publicly acclaimed as great. Hodgson was never accorded the fame that he perhaps deserved and probably desired. A *Himalayan Ornithologist* goes a long way towards righting that wrong.

Tony Baker



'To the Editor'

Poisoned Arrows

The book *Poisoned Arrows, an investigative journey through Indonesia* by George Monbiot, published by Michael Joseph, is very good reading, and the author can be admired for his adventurism and ingenuity. Unfortunately, I must disagree with some of his more startling inferences, particularly as these are mostly accepted by reviewers at their face value. Your bulletin is not the appropriate medium in which to comment on the accuracy or otherwise of these inferences, but I wish to place in your columns my strong objections to the author's proud boast that he used the deceit of posing as a birdwatcher in order to gain access to some areas of Irian Jaya. The author has done ornithology a gross disservice, just at a time when we are encouraging bird-watchers to take advantage of Indonesia's open tourist policy to collect useful data on the avifauna. Will future 'investigators' please refrain from using such deceit.

Derek Holmes, OBC Joint Rep. Indonesia, P.O. Box 287/JKSMG, Jakarta 12710A Indonesia.

New Chinese Merganser Specimen

Readers will be interested to know that the Taichung Bird Society now have a specimen of the rare Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus*. The bird arrived on Taiwan's west coast last year and was found drowned, having become entangled in a fishing net. The fishermen sent the bird to the Taichung Bird Society and Mr Wu was able to stuff and mount the bird.

Lin Chih Cheng, P.O. Box 61, Miaoli, Taiwan

Announcements & Requests

Voluntary Help Wanted in Sabah

A voluntary assistant is wanted to help on a project studying bird communities in logged forest. Money could be provided to pay for accommodation and food and to subsidise travel to the site. Experience is not essential although someone who can ring birds and is familiar with the avifauna of South-East Asia would be especially useful. For more details please write to Frank Lambert, Danum Valley, Field Centre, P.O.Box 282, 91108 Lahad Datu, Sabah, East Malaysia.

Nainital and Sultanpur Jheel records wanted

Paul Jepson is collecting records for a forthcoming paper on the winter birds of Nainital, Uttar Pradesh, India. If you have any records from this area he would be pleased to receive them. In conjunction with Dave Holman, he is also collating records from Sultanpur Jheel, Haryana, India with the view to perhaps producing a small birdwatching guide to this reserve, which is situated close to New Delhi. Observations between March and November would be particularly valued. All information used will be fully acknowledged. Please send your records and observations to Paul Jepson, 6 Habberley, nr Pontesbury, Shropshire, SY5 0TP, UK or to Dave Holman, 9 Salisbury Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 1TU, UK.

ICBP/FFPS Expedition Competition 1990



As reports are eagerly awaited from this year's winners, FFPS and ICBP announce the launch of the 1990 Conservation Expedition Competition. Established to encourage groups planning expeditions to adopt a conservation objective, preferably with a potentially long-term benefit, the competition is also important for the motivation it offers young scientists to become the conservationists of tomorrow.

This year's winners are visiting the forest of the Sozoranga Mountains, possibly the most threatened habitat in Ecuador; the remote islands of Sumba and Buru in Indonesia; one of the last remaining areas of Ghanaian rainforest in the Nini-Suhien National Park; and Tsaratanana rainforest reserve in Madagascar.

The competition is open to students from any country who are organising expeditions outside Europe and North America and offers prizes of £1000 and £800 in each of two categories, Birds and All other wild animals and plants.

The closing date for entries for the 1990 Conservation Expedition Competition is 31 January 1990.

For further information contact: Richard Grimmett, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK, tel. 0223 277318 or Amanda Hillier, FFPS, 79-83 North Street, Brighton, BN1 1ZA, UK, tel. 0273 820445.

Tit, Nuthatch and Creeper Pictures Wanted

Following requests in Bulletins 8 and 9, a number of very useful sound-recordings and tapes have been gratefully received from Club members for use in the preparation of a forthcoming field-guide. Photographs of any species of tits, nuthatches and Philippine Creepers will be very useful, but the following are especially needed: Chinese Nuthatch *Sitta villosa*, White-tailed Nuthatch *S. himalayensis*, Giant Nuthatch *S. magna*, Philippine creepers *Rhabdornis* spp., Fire-capped Tit *Cephalopyrus flammiceps*, Black-bibbed Tit *Parus hypermelas*, Pere David's Tit *P. davidi*, Yellow-bellied Tit *P. venustulus*, Elegant Tit *P. elegans*, Black-headed Tit *P. amabilis*, White-fronted Tit *P. semilarvatus* and Rufous-vented Tit *P. rubidiventris*. Photographs will be fully acknowledged and returned if requested. Please contact Simon Harrap, 23 Folgate Road, Heacham, King's Lynn PE31 7BQ, UK.

Thrush and Chat Photo Request

Photographs are needed to help in the preparation of artwork for a forthcoming guide to the thrushes and chats of the world. Many Oriental species have rarely (if ever) been photographed, and thus pictures of almost any species are likely to be useful. However, the following are some of the most pressing needs: Gould's Shortwing *Brachypteryx stellata*, Indian Blue Robin *Erithacus brunneus*, Golden Bush-Robin *Tarsiger chrysaeus*, White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*, Luzon Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor*, White-bellied Redstart *Hodgsonius phoenicuroides*, Sunda Blue Robin *Cinclidium diana*, Grandala *Grandala coelicolor*, cochoas *Cochoa* (all species), Jerdon's Bushchat *Saxicola jerdoni*, whistling-thrushes *Myophonus* (all species), forktails *Enicurus* (all species) and Black-collared Thrush *Chlamydochaera jefferyi*. Photographs will be returned if required and will, of course, be acknowledged. N.J. Redman, Holly Bank, Grindleton, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 4QT, UK.

MNS Conference June 1990

As part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Malayan Nature Society (MNS) is holding an International Conference on Conservation of Tropical Biodiversity on 12-16 June 1990 in Kuala Lumpur.

The conference aims to provide an opportunity for reviewing recent developments in the conservation of biodiversity in tropical ecosystems and a forum for scientists, conservationists, naturalists, governmental and non-governmental organisations to exchange views on issues related to nature conservation and management; and to create an awareness of conservation issues among the general public.

There are eleven provisional conference topics and prospective contributors are invited to send in a 300-word abstract of their suggested paper by 31st December 1989. Manuscripts would be required by 31 March 1990. The topics are: natural history of flora and fauna; development of ecology of tropical habitats; biodiversity of tropical rainforest, marine and aquatic ecosystems; endangered species; the human and social aspects of conservation; management of reserves and protected areas; research and extension programmes in conservation; conservation education; policy and legislation in conservation; regional and international co-operation; and forestry, agricultural and other land use and the environment.

The official language of the conference will be English, and in addition to the conference proceedings, social events and field visits will be organised.

Reduced rate accommodation is available for those attending and registration fees are as follows:

	Local Participant	Overseas Participant	Local Member	Overseas Member
Normal	M\$300	US\$250	M\$200	US\$150
Late Registration	M\$350	US\$300		

(after 31/3/90)

Those wishing to attend or to present a paper should contact: The Development Officer, Malayan Nature Society, P.O. Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Selangor Bird Race 1990

For members who missed the announcement in the last Bulletin, the Malayan Nature Society Selangor Branch is inviting birdwatchers from around the world to take part in its 1990 Bird Race. This cross-state race aims to raise funds to help construct an education centre, observation hides, boardwalks and a hostel. For full details contact; Selangor Bird Race, Selangor Branch, Malayan Nature Society, PO Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

National Wildlife Federation Award for Dr. Cheng

Professor Cheng Tso-hsin has recently been given the prestigious National Wildlife Federation's Special Conservation Achievement Award. The award citation reads as follows:

'Man's understanding of the animal kingdom has been greatly enriched by Professor Cheng Tso-hsin's dedication to the field of ornithology. Founder and President of the China Zoological Society and the China Ornithological Society, Professor Cheng's work during the past 50 years includes discovering 15 new subspecies of Chinese birds. While the scores of scientific books, papers and articles he has authored have been mostly in Chinese, his most recent work, *A Synopsis of the Avifauna of China*, is in English. The 1224-page volume covers all the birds discovered and recorded in China'.

Asian Crane Congress 1989

The Asian Crane Congress will be held from 27 to 29 December 1989, followed by a four day workshop on wetland field study techniques, in Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India. For further information, contact Prof. R.M. Naik, Co-ordinator, Asian Crane Congress, Department of Biosciences, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, 360 005, India.

New Brunei Information

Clive Mann has just published a 'Checklist of the Birds of Brunei' in the *Brunei Museum Journal* 1987. This will be updated in the next issue of the Journal.



Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from February to June 1989. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisation in due course.

HONG KONG

Two Leach's Storm or Band-rumped Storm Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa/castro* were observed in the Tolo Channel on 19 March; the first record of any storm-petrel in Hong Kong waters other than Swinhoe's *O. monorhis* (AL). A Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* overwintered and was still present at Mai Po in mid-April. Two juvenile Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* were recorded at Cheung Chau on 20 May with smaller numbers of other terns (MW).

On 19 June a dead Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* was found near Kadoorie Farm, suggesting that this elusive species may breed in the area (ML). A Russet or Brown Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus seebohmi/luteoventris* was heard giving a 'zee-bit' type call at Lung Kwu Tan (near Castle Peak Power Station) from 10-12 March (NC *et al.*) and, also on 12 March, a Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler *Cettia fortipes* was heard singing at the same locality. This is the first time that the species has been recorded singing, thus removing all doubts of its occurrence in Hong Kong (PK, MT, MC). A family party of Vinous-throated Parrotbills *Paradoxornis webbianus* at Wah Fu on 16 April (PK) provided confirmation of the species breeding in Hong Kong, as did a party of five Yellow-cheeked Tits *Parus spilonotus*, which included one young bird being fed, at Tai Po Kau on 27 May.

A Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* at Tai Po Kau on 15 April (DS, WY) was the first for Hong Kong, although the possibility of the bird being an escape has not been ruled out. Another bird, or the same individual, was found on 14 August (S & MO'B). A Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis* at Cheung Chau on 4 May (DM) would also be a first if accepted. A Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* reported from Tai Po Kau on 15 April (GG) may be the first Hong Kong record.

Several good birds turned up at Shuen Wan in April. A Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* appeared on the 13th (NC), a Yellow-hooded Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* was seen on the 8th, and on the 5th, a male Common Reed-Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* was seen and it remained for several days (SS, JE, AL). A Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus* was present on Tai Po Kau from 13 May to 10 June (SS, RL). Also noteworthy were three Pechora Pipits *Anthus gustavi* reported from Mount Davis/Wah Fu on 20 May (PK), up to eight Eurasian Penduline Tits *Remiz pendulinus* at Mai Po at the end of April (DM *et al.*), and at least four Chestnut-cheeked Starlings *Sturnus philippensis* at the same locality on 22 April (PK).

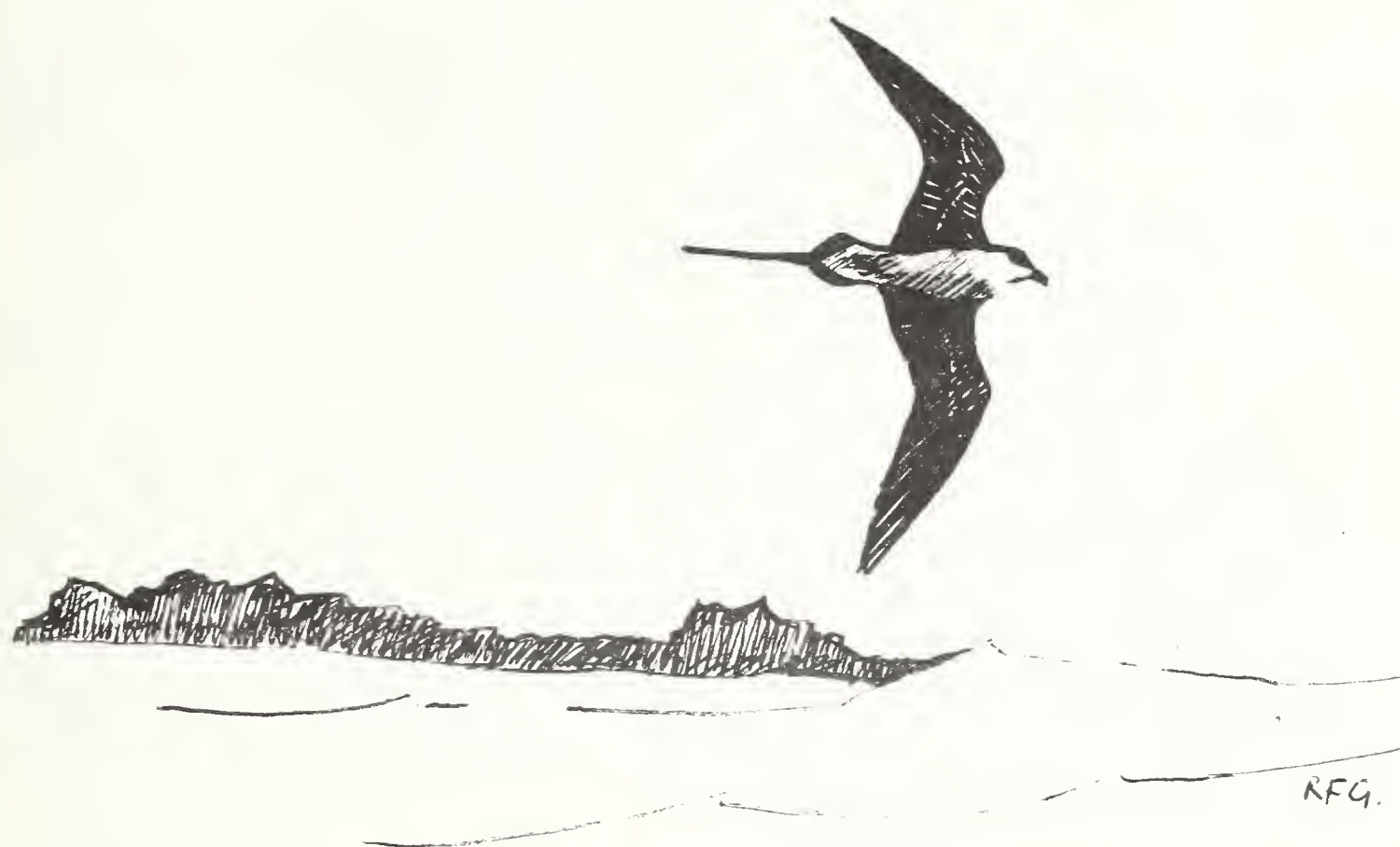
CHINA

While still within sight of the Chinese coast on a boat passage from Shanghai to Hong Kong, good numbers of skuas (jaegers) *Stercorarius* were noted including; 39 Pomarine *S. pomarinus* on 5-6 May, 22 Long-tailed *S. longicaudus* (including a flock of 13) on 6 May and a single Arctic (Parasitic) *S. parasiticus*. There were also three Ancient Murrelets *Synthliboramphus antiquus*. Birds landing on the boat included Little Heron *Butorides striatus* and Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (PHo).

On Omei Shan, south of Chengdu, Sichuan, at least one and probably ten Japanese Waxwings *Bombycilla japonica* on 11 May and a single Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* on 12 May were interesting (UO). Further south at the Jianfengling reserve on Hainan Island, between 28 May and 2 June several family parties of Racket-tailed Treepies *Temnurus temnurus* were found as well as a family of White-winged Magpies *Urocissa whiteheadi* (UO). This appears to be the first recent sighting of the latter species by foreign birdwatchers visiting the island. A pair of Crested Honey-Buzzards *Pernis (apivorus) ptilorhyncus* in display flight at the same locality, were also very interesting as the species is currently only considered a winter visitor to the island. (UO). Returning to the mainland on the Haikou-Guangzhou ferry, the same observer recorded c.20 Short-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus tenuirostris*. The latter appears to be the first record for China.

Observations on migrating birds at Beidaihe, Hebei, continued this spring and some of the most interesting records came from PH. The most unusual was a Rock Sandpiper *Calidris ptilocnemis* on 6 May, the first for China. At least 16 Relict Gulls *Larus relictus* (all but one were adults) were located during April and early May. Vagrants and east coast rarities included an American Common Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis* on 1 April, two Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* on 30 March, a female Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* on

19 April, a Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* on 30 April, a Little Stint *Calidris minuta* from 28 April to 2 May (PH, LM *et al.*), with a possible second bird on 6 May (MC, RI), an adult summer Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* on 18 April, six Greater Short-toed Larks *Calandrella cinerea* between 27 April and 7 May, male (MC, RI *et al.*) and female (AD, PHy *et al.*) Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* on 6 May, a Chinese Thrush *Turdus mupinensis* on 6 May (AD, PHy *et al.*), with another or the same individual nearby on 9-10 May, and four Common Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* between 22 March and 10 April.



Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (drawing by Richard Grimmett)

PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

A single Rusty-naped Pitta *Pitta oatesi* was heard and tape-recorded along the Pump House road, Genting Highlands, Pahang, on 21 May extending the known distribution of the species by about 35 km further south along the main range from Fraser's Hill (DB, CP, DT). There were two interesting nest records. A nest of White-browed Shrike-babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis* containing two young was found on Fraser's Hill, Pahang on 31 May, and was only the second nest found containing young in Peninsular Malaysia (AJ). A nest of the Malaysian Rail-Babbler *Eupetes macrocerus* with two eggs at Kuala Lompat (Krau Game Reserve), Pahang on 6 February, was the first ever recorded in Peninsular Malaysia (GD).

SINGAPORE

Once again records compiled from *Singapore Avifauna*, the monthly Bulletin of the Singapore branch of the Malayan Nature Society, were received from LKS.

A male Yellow-hooded Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* in summer plumage at Ponggol on 11 March was the first confirmed Singapore record and was also new for the Malay peninsula. Also new for Singapore was a sub-adult female Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus*, observed being attended by a pair of Brown-throated Sunbirds *Anthreptes malacensis* at King Albert Park from 29 May to 7 June.

A Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* found dead after crashing into a building at Clementi on 16 April was the first record of the species in Singapore this century, and only the second ever. Also noteworthy was a male Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* at Ponggol on 11 March, the first record since 1940 and the second overall. This year's spring passage again produced an influx of up to five Schrenck's Bitterns *Ixobrychus eurhythmus* at Marina South, Sarimbun and MacRitchie Reservoir, between 4 March and 22 April, and up to four Ruddy Kingfishers *Halcyon coromanda* (nominate subspecies) from Seletar, Senoko, Nee Soon and MacRitchie Reservoir between 2 March and 1 April. Also of note were an immature Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* at Senoko on 5 and 7 March and a pair of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* at Sungei Buloh bird sanctuary on 21 May; apparently only the second Singapore record.

At Bukit Timah nature reserve, the calls of a Red-throated Barbet *Megalaima mystacophanos* attracted several observers throughout March but no good sightings were made and the record could not be confirmed. The only previous Singapore record is of a bird collected in the 1890s. Also present here was a female White-throated Rock-Thrush *Monticola gularis* (present since the previous November) on 10 March. A Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* at Seletar on 24 March was also noteworthy, as the local population of the species is now believed to be down to only two birds, and almost certainly doomed to extinction.

Records were collated by Craig Robson from observations and contributions from the following: D. Bakewell (DB), M. Crosby (MC), G. Davison (GD), A. Dean (AD), G. Groh (GG), P. Holt (PH), Hong Kong Birdwatching Society (MC, NC, JE, AL, ML, RL, DM, S & MO'B, DS, SS, MT, MW, WY), P. Hopkin (PHo), P. Hyde (PHy), R. Innis (RI), A. Jeyarajasingam (AJ), P. Kennerley (PK), Lim Kim Seng (LKS), L. Marshall (LM), U. Olsson (UO), C. Poole (CP), D. Tan (DT).

THE BULLETIN OF THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews, and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude or pre-empt publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial Committee, with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or reviewing are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2DL, UK.

Guidelines for contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. Articles These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow King *et al.* (1975) *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*.
Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.
It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted.
2. Recent Reports These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to C.Robson, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, UK.
3. News/Information Typed or hand-written contributions should be sent to R.Grimmett, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, UK.

Although every effort is made to retain all articles in their submitted form, the Editorial Committee reserves the right to make changes that it deems necessary, and, in a minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions.

For News and Views, Book Reviews, Announcements and Letters, the deadline for submission of material is 1 March (spring Bulletin) and 1 September (autumn Bulletin). Recent reports are needed one month earlier. The deadlines do not apply to the main articles which will be published as soon as possible after acceptance by the Editorial Committee.

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